

Homicide

In 1999, the estimated number of persons murdered in the United States was 15,553. The 1999 figure was down 8% from 1998 and 28% from 1995. (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). 15 October 2000. *Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports, 1999*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 14.)

The national murder rate in 1999 was 5.7 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest since 1966. Five- and ten-year trends show the 1999 murder rate was 30% lower than in 1995 and 39% lower than the 1990 rate. (Ibid.)

Firearms were used in approximately seven out of every ten murders committed in the nation in 1999. (Ibid., 17)

Handguns accounted for 51% of the murder total for which weapon data were submitted. (Ibid.)

Forty-two enforcement officers were feloniously slain in the line of duty during 1999, nineteen fewer than in 1998. (Ibid., 291)

In 1999, 47% of murder victims were black, 50% were white, and the remaining 3% of murder victims were other races. Seventy-six percent of murder victims were male and 88% were eighteen or older. (Ibid., 14)

Supplemental data for 1999 indicate that 48% of all murder victims knew their assailants. Twelve percent of offenders were identified as strangers, and offenders were unknown in 40% of murders. (Ibid. 17)

Handguns were used in 51% of all murders committed in 1999. Knives were used in 13% of the cases; personal weapons (hands,

fists, feet, etc.) in 7%; and blunt objects in 6% of all murders. (Ibid.)

Males are over nine times more likely than females to commit murder, and male and female offenders are more likely to target males as victims. (Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). January 1999. *Homicide Trends in the United States, Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.)

Of all persons murdered in 1997, 11%, or 2,100, were under the age of eighteen. Of these, 33% were under the age of six; 50% were ages fifteen through seventeen; 30% were female; 47% were black; and 56% were killed with a firearm. Forty percent were killed by family members, 45% by acquaintances, and 15% by strangers. (National Center for Juvenile Justice. September 1999. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 17.)

In 1997, juvenile homicide rates were the lowest in the decade but still 21% above the average of the 1980s. In 27% of homicides by juveniles, the victim was also a juvenile. (Ibid., 53 and 54)

A firearm killed 70% of victims murdered by juveniles. Of all victims killed by juveniles, 14% were family members; 55% were acquaintances; and 31% were strangers. (Ibid., 54)

In 1997, an estimated 2,300 murders (approximately 12% of all murders) in the United States involved at least one juvenile offender. In 31% of homicides involving juvenile offenders, an adult offender was also involved. (Ibid.)